



April 7, 2025

Re: COIN Testimony in Opposition to SB 12

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules, Senators Golden, Manning, and Thatcher,

We are writing on behalf of the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) to urge you to vote no on SB 12. COIN is made up of Indivisible groups from across Oregon that collaborate to protect our democracy through, in part, voter outreach and education about candidates for elected office, including judges.

Unlike other candidates for elected offices, judges are limited in the information they can provide the public in their election campaigns. Judges are prohibited from discussing most issues or topics of community interest in order to maintain their impartiality in deciding cases that may come before them. The descriptor “incumbent” has been included on the ballot to describe appointed judges who have not yet run for election in order to give voters more information about these candidates; the idea was to allow voters to have as much information as possible about candidates who cannot discuss the issues and matters of interest in their campaigns. It is still difficult for many voters to find information easily about judicial candidates. By knowing a judicial candidate is an “incumbent”, a voter can make a decision based on job performance rather than, for example, name recognition. The descriptor “incumbent” is simply information that can help voters make an informed decision. There is no valid reason to remove it from the ballot.

Also, when then Governor Barbara Roberts began appointing some of the first women and people of color to our benches, these appointees then ran for office as incumbents and were elected because voters knew they had been doing the job and were capable. These judges changed the face of Oregon’s bench to one that is far more diverse and inclusive today.

On behalf of COIN I urge you to vote no on SB 12. Thank you.

Laura Allen, Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network - COIN